



Public Interest Center | P.O. Box 1049 | Columbus, OH | 43216-1049

FOR RELEASE: November 30, 2011
MEDIA CONTACT: Heather Lauer, (614) 644-2160
CITIZEN CONTACT: Darla Peelle, (614) 644-2160

Ohio EPA Releases Draft Upper Great Miami Watershed Study
Agency Will Accept Comments on Report until January 5, 2012

An Ohio EPA [draft report](#) addresses impairments at sites in the upper Great Miami River watershed. An earlier report found 64 percent of the watershed fully meets water quality standards necessary to sustain a healthy ecosystem of fish and other aquatic life, but 72 percent of sites tested have bacteria levels which do not meet recreation use goals. The Agency is seeking public comments about the report before a final document is submitted to U.S. EPA.

Using an earlier scientific report as a guide, Ohio EPA will work with local stakeholders to further develop water quality improvement strategies. A fact sheet about the report is available on the web.

The draft total maximum daily load (TMDL) report addresses adverse impacts and outlines some of the steps necessary to restore and maintain watershed health. Once finalized, the TMDL will guide Ohio EPA's issuance of discharge permits and the implementation of locally developed nonpoint source pollution control programs.

The draft report uses findings from an earlier report to make its recommendations. The earlier report, Biological and Water Quality Study of the Upper Great Miami River and Selected Tributaries 2008, provides results from an extensive examination of the upper Great Miami River and its tributaries. Ohio EPA biologists assessed the chemical, physical and biological attributes of the 748-square-mile watershed, which includes Auglaize, Mercer, Logan, Shelby, Champaign, Darke and Hardin counties. The results from this study directed the development of the draft upper Great Miami River TMDL report.

The primary concern for humans is elevated levels of bacteria found throughout the watershed. Sites were sampled for *E. coli* bacteria to see if they exceeded the primary contact standards associated with recreational activities such as swimming, boating, water skiing and canoeing. An elevated level of *E. coli* indicates the potential presence of bacteria that could cause disease or infection when recreating in or on the water. High bacteria levels may be attributed to human and/or animal wastes.

The western portion of the basin was most impaired, particularly in the Loramie Creek sub-watershed. In this area, many free-flowing streams had been straightened. Habitat alteration, siltation and nutrient enrichment associated with channelization and agricultural runoff were the most common problems affecting water quality. These accounted for 73 percent of the water quality impairments affecting aquatic life.

Ohio EPA has one of the most advanced water quality monitoring programs in the nation. Information gathered helps guide the Agency's issuance of discharge permits and implementation of local storm water programs. The Agency also shares the information with area governments, landowners and citizens so they can develop local plans to restore waterways affected by pollution.

Comments related to the draft TMDL report will be accepted until January 5, 2012, and should be mailed to, Beth Risley, P.O. Box 1049, Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water, Columbus, Ohio 43216 or emailed to beth.risley@epa.state.oh.us. After considering comments, Ohio EPA will submit a final document to U.S. EPA for approval.

Following U.S. EPA approval of the report, a stakeholder-driven effort to generate more specific nonpoint source-based recommendations will be developed. The Greater Dayton Partners for the Environment (GDPE) -- an alliance of environmental organizations, government and civic organizations, and public and private educational institutions in the Great Miami River watershed -- proposes to coordinate this effort.

-30-

www.epa.ohio.gov